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NEWSMAKERS

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Imelda Marcos keeping to self

Still smarting from opposition electoral victories, Philippine first lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos lately has shown little of the flair or opulence for which she's known.

The "steel butterfly," as CIA cables once described her, turned 55 today having all but dropped from sight. Over the weekend, her husband, President Ferdinand Marcos, reappointed her minister of human settlements.

She spent part the day in Manila before a board investigating the assassination of Benigno Aquino — her husband's chief political rival — last Aug. 21. She said she convinced Aquino to go to the USA for heart surgery in 1980 and later warned him his life was in danger in the Philippines.

Imelda has given no interviews since 15 candidates she backed lost National Assembly seats in the May 14 election.

Long seen as the successor to her husband, Imelda takes pride in her bigger-than-life image. "The little people want to see a star," she once said.

Born to a wealthy family in Tacloban, Leyte, Imelda won the Miss Manila title of 1954.



AP
MARCOS: Reappointed minister of human settlements

She married her husband the same year after an 11-day courtship. Besides her post as first lady, Imelda is mayor of metropolitan Manila.

She spent money on lavish projects critics charged were wasteful in a country with nearly 70 percent in poverty.

Her jet-setting extravagance is legendary: million-dollar estates, shopping sprees around the globe and audiences with kings, presidents and popes. On a visit to the USA two years ago, she had 200 suitcases.

— Paul Hoversten